

## CHARACTER SKETCHES

(Written for THE COURIER.)

One who gave the slightest attention to the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the University of Nebraska, which was so conspicuously successful, could have failed to be impressed with the strong personality and wonderful vigor, intellectual and physical, of the chancellor. His influence was felt in every exercise or feature of the varied program, and all day Thursday and Friday Chancellor Canfield was the vibrant axle on which everything turned.

Chancellor Canfield has not escaped criticism. No man who obeys Longfellow's injunction and seeks to escape from the ranks of dumb, driven cattle, is free from the shafts of enmity, or envy, and the poisoned darts that are thrown promiscuously by little people. Men always want a leader; but when the leader appears evil must needs come also. I do not mean to infer that Chancellor Canfield has provoked any serious opposition, or that there is any considerable fault finding with his course. He is a man of ideas and activity, and since he came to Lincoln he has proceeded to put his ideas into practice, fearlessly and not always with the greatest regard for conventional precedents. He has infused a wonderful energy into every department of the university, and has seen his labor bear fruit.

A progressive, aggressive man, he has hitched his wagon to a high star, and it would be very surprising indeed if he had escaped criticism. The man who goes through life and escapes criticism might much more profitably have remained unborn. He is of no use in the world. There are two kinds of criticism, honest and dishonest. One is the ingenious expression of an intelligent, honest opinion, and the other is really no criticism at all. It is merely the vehicle for the transmission of spiteful and ill-tempered ideas coming from dwarfed minds.

"The chancellor puts himself forward a great deal," is a remark sometimes heard. He does. What of it? Is he to secrete himself in some obscure cloister of the university, following the example of too many educators, and exhibit himself before the public gaze at very infrequent intervals as an object of curiosity? Is he to shut himself out of the world, and shut the world out of the university, and conduct the institution on monastic lines? Is he to allow himself to be disqualified for his important position by burying himself in the cobwebs and dust of his sanctum, and gradually become encrusted with ancient forms and filled with obsolete ideas? Or is he to measure up to something like the idea of the professional office which Professor Howard advanced in his splendid address last Thursday evening, and, being and remaining a man of learning and an educator, reach out and come in contact with the world and its practicalities, and keep step with its various progressive movements?

People complain sometimes of the lack of practicality in the present system of college and university education, and no doubt justly. One reason for the condition that makes such a complaint justifiable is the fact that in so many instances college professors are nothing more nor less than book worms alive to the niceties of differential calculus, or the hypotheses of philosophy, or the fecundity of philology, or the minutiae of ancient history, but dead to the living, moving, progressive things of the world of to-day. Their ideas go backward rather than forward, and imbibing none of the juice that flows so freely in the current of active, real life, they dry up and shrivel away among their dusty tomes and worn-out apparatus. Conjure up in your mind's eye the professional type, and you will see a bloodless, shriveled, stoop-shouldered person with lack luster eye. This is the type presented on the stage, and it corresponds with more or less propriety to the general idea of what the professor really is.

That Chancellor Canfield has so effectively steered away from the old time traditions is highly commendable. It is by so doing that he has achieved success. He has indeed put himself forward. He has become since his residence in Nebraska, a Nebraskan. He has mingled with men, and he is a man among men. Yes, he has put himself forward, if you like to express it that way, but who can say that he has ever had any other idea than the broadening of his own mind, the enhancement of his usefulness, and correspondingly, the development of the University of Nebraska, to which he has thoroughly consecrated himself?

The chancellor is a scholarly man—I think no one will question his intellectual capability, and yet he is singularly successful in avoiding the pedagogical characteristics that we are so accustomed to seeing. He is more like his fellow men than any professor I know. We say of a man that he is in his ele-

ment in this or that occupation or function. Chancellor Canfield is always in his element—and this is what makes him a remarkable man. His versatility and adaptability are extraordinary. If he is in his element in the classroom, he is equally in his element in the great business office of the university, where he finds pleasure in assuming responsibility and performing hard manual labor; and I am sure that those who have had the pleasure of hearing his witty remarks at the banquet table or his addresses from the public platform will testify that he is happily at home in both of these places. In fact I do not know of any reputable place where he cannot go and appear at ease and acquit himself creditably, or of any undertaking in which he could not successfully engage. The rough edges, if any there were, have been knocked off him; the dust of the study is not observable—contact with the world and his nervous activity keeps him clear from this. He is warm blooded and enthusiastic with enough self restraint to keep him on this side of the border of crankdom.

It is not my desire to be laudatory, but simply to give the chancellor his due credit. He has his weaknesses. He is a man. He is tremendously ambitious. Tremendously is a strong word; but it does not overstate the truth. And this ambition leads him to undertake more than he ought to perform; albeit he does not attempt more than he carries out. He wants things well done, and this desire, quickened by his intense nervous energy urges him to do many things that he ought to leave to his subordinates. Energy is wasted on small details that ought to be reserved for larger and more important things. Somebody has said that he is the greatest executive who makes those who are under his control relieve him, satisfactorily, of the greatest amount of work. Chancellor Canfield does not carry out this idea. Not content with planning and directing, he must also get down among the workmen and put his own shoulder to the wheel. There can be no doubt that he injures himself by too close application to comparatively unimportant details.

It isn't an easy matter to distinguish between cause and effect here. Whether the chancellor has become nervous through the strain to which he subjects himself, or whether nervous energy is an original characteristic and that it is this very thing that causes him to attempt so much more than he ought, is not very clear.

One of the chancellor's strong points is the quality that enables him to link his arm with that of the passing student, and to make the latter feel that he, Canfield, has an interest in him and his work.

What the chancellor may accomplish, what he may do for the university, are subjects that do not properly come within the province of this sketch. We have only to do with his personality. But endowed as he is with strong intellectual power, and great vigor; possessing in reasonable measure the power of concentration—seldom the concomitant of an ambition such as his, keeping himself in touch with the latest and most progressive ideas of his time, and with the rare gift of adaptability, it would seem that the chancellor of the University of Nebraska has something more than an ordinary future before him, and that the institution over which he presides, is destined to make rapid and effective strides toward the goal which the chancellor and the people of Nebraska have marked out for it.

(To be Continued.)

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